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LETTER DATED 28 JUNE 1996 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF RWANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to refer to our meeting in the office of the President of the United Nations Security Council on 17 June 1996, during which you sought the views of the Government of Rwanda on:

- The request of the Government of Zaire to deploy United Nations observers on Zaire's border with Rwanda.

- The idea of holding an international conference on peace, stability and development in the Great Lakes region.

After consulting with the relevant authorities on the question of deploying United Nations observers on the Zaire border, we wish to state that it is the sovereign right of Zaire to make such a request, especially as the deployment of the United Nations observers will be on its territory. We also wish to further inform you that the Government of Rwanda has not made any similar request.

We were also informed that it is being envisaged to send a technical mission to Zaire with a view to formulating proposals for the deployment of the observers on the Zaire border.

In our view, sending yet another mission to the region may not be appropriate. It will be recalled here that the International Commission of Inquiry which was set up pursuant to Security Council resolution 1013 (1995) reported to the Council the difficulties it met in the fulfilment of its mission (see S/1996/195). The position of the Government of Rwanda on the report has been and still remains as stated in the letter from the Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the President of the Security Council dated 27 March 1996 (S/1996/222).

In this connection, and while not prejudging the outcome of yet another resource-consuming technical mission which may not be helpful, the Security Council should instead urge the completion of the work of the International Commission of Inquiry and request full cooperation of all Member States which have not yet done so, as indicated in the report of the Commission of Inquiry

(S/1996/195) and in accordance with Council resolution 1053 (1996) of 23 April 1996. To us, this is a necessary and logical step rather than juxtaposing a parallel technical commission in the same region and at the same time.

It may also be very likely that the same countries which did not cooperate with the International Commission of Inquiry are now asking for this technical mission so as to sideline the conclusion of the work of the Commission of Inquiry.

In discussing this subject, the President of the Security Council would help members of the Council if he were to make available copies of the Amnesty International report (14 June 1996) and that of the United States Committee on Refugees (June 1996) on the situation in Massisi. These and many other independent reports would be extremely helpful to the Council in better understanding the nature of the problems in the Great Lakes region.

On the question of the proposal to convene an international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region, the view of the Government of Rwanda is:

- It is the primary responsibility of the countries of the region themselves to ensure the security, peace and development of their region.

- Support from the international community in the form of a conference to address matters of security, peace and development can only be helpful if such assistance has been requested by the countries themselves to support their own home-grown initiatives. The Government of Rwanda has not asked for this conference because we want to fully explore the initiatives which are under way by the Heads of State of the region.

- In the circumstances such home-grown initiatives to address the problems of the region do exist, as exemplified by the Nairobi Declaration of 7 January 1995, the Cairo Declaration of 29 November 1995, the Tunis Declaration of 18 March 1996 and the recently concluded summit meeting of the Heads of State of the region at Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania (24 and 25 June 1996).

The above-mentioned declarations of commitment were solemnly signed by the Heads of State of the region. They were also facilitated and witnessed by highly respected eminent persons in the names of ex-Presidents Jimmy Carter (United States of America), Julius K. Nyerere (United Republic of Tanzania) and Toure (Mali).

In those declarations the countries of the region agreed on a number of measures to be taken with a view to finding solutions to the problems of the Great Lakes region.

Meanwhile, it may also be recalled that the United Nations organized, jointly with the Organization of African Unity, a conference (15-27 February 1995) at Bujumbura on the question of refugees of the region.

The two organizations have already started examining the modalities for appropriate follow-up to that Conference. Calling for an international conference to address the problems of the Great Lakes region at this time would seriously undermine the credibility of the signatures, commitment and initiatives of the Heads of State of the region.

In this regard, we request the Security Council to refrain from other parallel initiatives which might sideline the initiatives of the region itself.

Finally, we should like to request the distribution of the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Pierre Emmanuel UBALIJORO
Second Counsellor
Chargé d'affaires a.i.